



# Hamilton County Emergency Management

## Severe Weather Preparedness – Understanding Watches and Warnings

March 21, 2018

Hamilton County Emergency Management continues this week's series of severe weather preparedness by focusing on the different types of information issued by the National Weather Service. Everyone should know the differences between a weather watch and a weather warning.

### Overview

Watch		Warning
A few to several hours	Duration	20 minutes to an hour
Large sections of states or portions of a few states	Coverage Area	Counties and/or portions of counties
Several hours	Advance Notice	Minutes
Have a plan and be alert	Action	Take shelter

### Steve Thunderstorms

**Severe Thunderstorm Watch:** Be Prepared! Severe thunderstorms are possible in and near the watch area. Stay informed and be ready to act if a severe thunderstorm warning is issued. The watch area is typically large, covering numerous counties or even states.

**Severe Thunderstorm Warning:** Take Action! Severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. Warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property. Take shelter in a substantial building. Get out of mobile homes that can blow over in high winds. Warnings typically encompass a much smaller area (around the size of a city or small county) that may be impacted by a large hail or damaging wind identified by an NWS forecaster on radar or by a trained spotter/law enforcement who is watching the storm.

### Tornadoes

**Tornado Watch:** Be Prepared! Tornadoes are possible in and near the watch area. Review and discuss your emergency plans and check supplies and your safe room. Be ready to act quickly if a warning is issued or you suspect a tornado is approaching. Acting early helps to save lives! Watches are issued by the Storm Prediction Center for counties where tornadoes may occur. The watch area is typically large, covering numerous counties or even states.

**Tornado Warning:** Take Action! A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. There is an imminent danger to life and property. Move to an interior room on the lowest floor of a sturdy building. Avoid windows. If in a mobile home, a vehicle, or outdoors, move to the closest substantial shelter and protect yourself from flying debris. Warnings are issued by your local forecast office. Warnings typically encompass a much smaller area (around the size of a city or small county) that may be impacted by a tornado identified by a forecaster on Radar or by a trained spotter/law enforcement who is watching the storm.



## Hamilton County Emergency Management

### Severe Weather Preparedness – Understanding Watches and Warnings

#### Closing

It is important to remember the distinct difference between a watch and a warning. A watch means get ready and a warning means take action now. Hamilton County Emergency Management encourages the public, businesses, and schools to prepare now for severe weather. Additional resources are available on Emergency Management's website at [www.hamiltoncounty.in.gov/em](http://www.hamiltoncounty.in.gov/em) and from the National Weather Service at [www.weather.gov/ind](http://www.weather.gov/ind).